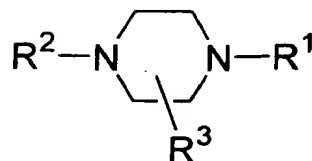


ABSTRACT

A novel process for preparing a compound of the formula I:



wherein

R¹ denotes substituted or unsubstituted alkyl, alkoxy, aryl, aryloxy or arylalkoxy; R² denotes substituted or unsubstituted alkyl, alkoxy, aryl, aryloxy, arylalkoxy, tosyl, formyl, acetyl or amine; and R³ denotes substituted or unsubstituted alkyl, alkoxy, aryl, aryloxy or arylalkoxy is disclosed. These compounds are useful in the synthesis of the antidepressant mirtazapine and other tetracyclic compounds.